

*Our English
Chauncey M. Depew.*

SPEECH OF HON. CHAUNCEY M. DEPEW, AT THE
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH
OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN BY THE GRAND
ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC, DEPARTMENT OF
NEW YORK, AT THE ARMORY OF THE 71ST
REGIMENT, N. G. N. Y., NEW YORK CITY, ON
FEBRUARY 12, 1909.

COMRADES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

It is eminently fitting that the birthday of Abraham Lincoln should be celebrated by the Grand Army of the Republic. It was at his call, as President, that the first seventy-five thousand men enlisted to save the Union. Afterward on other appeals the cry "We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand more" rang through every city, village and hamlet in the land, and forth from the fields, the workshop, the factory, the store and the office went these followers of Abraham Lincoln to fight for the preservation of the Union. In every way in which a great ruler can alleviate the horrors of war and care for his soldiers Abraham Lincoln rendered to them, as a body and individually, all the service in his power. They were ever in that great heart of his, and an appeal on their behalf would cause him to lay aside every duty, no matter how great, to encourage, rescue or save.

We read much in these days of the lack of opportunity for young men. It is claimed that the difficulty of earning a living or of getting ahead increases year by year, but to all who despair, all who are discouraged, all who have a spark of ambition the life of Abraham Lincoln is an example and inspiration. There is no youth in this audience to-night and very few, if any, in all this land who are surrounded with such discouraging conditions as those which were the lot and part of Abraham Lincoln from the time of his birth until he had passed his twenty-fifth year. He was born in a log cabin of one room with a dirt floor, on a farm so sterile that it was impossible for his father to make a living. When he was seven years old the family moved upon government land in the forests of Indiana, and at that tender

age he assisted his parents in constructing another rude habitation which had neither doors nor windows and through which swept the rains of summer and the snows of winter. He worked either with his father in an effort to make a clearing in the woods upon which might be raised food for the family or else tramped miles to work as a farm-hand for distant neighbors, giving his wages, which were ever so limited, into the family fund. Sickness carried off his mother, a good woman but uneducated, who did the best she could and probably died from the privations of frontier life. Then abandoning their farm the family moved again to Illinois. Here he once more did his best to build a rude home for the family, and the rails which he split for a fence were thirty years afterward carried into the Illinois convention which presented him as a candidate for President, and in the campaign after his nomination took rank with the things which captured the popular mind in the "Tippecanoe and Tyler too" campaign of General Harrison and the "Mill boy of the Slashes" which kept the name of Henry Clay a household word. At twenty-one, putting all his earthly belongings into a handkerchief tied to a stick, he tramped to the village of Salem to make his own way in the world. He became a clerk in a country store at ten dollars a month. He, with other young men, built a flat boat and stocked it with some things on credit and floated down to New Orleans. That visit was one of the milestones in his career. He wandered one day into the market place where slaves were being publicly sold. There was a beautiful octoroon girl on the block. The auctioneer was calling off her physical perfections. A rough crowd of brutal men were exchanging with their bids lecherous jokes about her. Lincoln, a tall, ungainly, ill-clad flatboat man, shook his fist at the exhibition and said: "If I ever get a chance, I will hit that thing hard." That remark matured subsequently in the proclamation of emancipation.

He and a friend bought a grocery store upon credit. It was slimly stocked and they were cheated in the bargain in giving eight hundred dollars for the goods. His partner took to drink and became a confirmed drunkard, while Lincoln neglected customers to read and study such few books as he could borrow. The goods disappeared and

the firm became bankrupt without any assets. Then Lincoln studied surveying. He managed to secure the necessary instruments and a horse and buggy and traveled the country, fixing boundary lines between farmers' lands and staking out streets of budding villages and towns. When he had paid for his outfit misfortune again befell him. The notes which he and his partner gave for the store had been sold immediately at a tremendous discount and then bought up subsequently by a shylock money lender for a few dollars. This money lender now secured judgment, levied upon and sold Mr. Lincoln's horse, wagon, surveying instruments and everything which he possessed. The neighbors were so shocked that they refused to bid and a friend bought in at a small price the outfit and loaned it to Mr. Lincoln to pursue his profession. So that at twenty-five, after all these sad experiences on the farm, the flatboat and the grocery, he found himself in debt. It would have been easy to have escaped that obligation. He was so advised by his friends, but the answer, which was characteristic of his life and characteristic of one of the most honest of minds, was: "I promised to pay." It was many years before he was able to clear off that obligation.

About this time a young lady of beauty, family and culture, to whom he was engaged, contracted a fatal illness and died in his presence. His friends feared he would lose his mind with grief. It was a sorrow which pursued him for years, and from which he never entirely recovered. He now, burdened with debt and almost crushed with this pathetic tragedy, practically started anew at twenty-six to study law. In these days a young man, before he can be admitted to the bar, must have an education of the common school and high school or academy, which means years of study and opportunity for study. Before he can be admitted to the great law schools he must have received a degree in a college of liberal learning, and then before he can be graduated from the law school he must spend four years in hard work. Lincoln became a great lawyer, but think of his equipment when he began to study. He had only about four months of schooling under five different teachers scattered over several years and at no period over three weeks at a time. None of these teachers were equipped beyond reading, writing and simple arithmetic. During his life on the farm he had borrowed every

book there was in those frontier neighborhoods. The family Bible he read over and over again. A Justice of the Peace had the revised statutes of Indiana and that he read with the same thoroughness. As the family moved from Indiana to Illinois where the settlements were closer, and when he came to the village of Salem, he succeeded in borrowing Shakespeare, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Aesop's Fables, Weems's *Life of Washington* and a crude history of the United States. He read while following the plow, to the disgust of his employer, on moonlight nights lying upon his back in the fields, while going to and from his work, while on the flatboat, while a clerk and while a merchant. He had no teacher of style or composition. There was little paper in the wilderness, but he wrote compositions on the wooden snow shovel with a piece of charcoal and rubbed it off and re-wrote until he had secured by these crude methods and by the teachings of the Bible, Shakespeare and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* that wonderful style in sinewy English which contributed to our literature two of its rarest gems, the Gettysburg speech and the second inaugural address.

The following is an illustration of his difficulties in finding books for which he was hungry: The rain came through the roof of the log cabin and ruined Weems's *Life of Washington* which he had borrowed from a distant farmer. This is the life, now entirely out of print, in which is the story of the hatchet and the cherry tree, a story that has not found its way into the regular histories or any other life of Washington. It is a story, though, which does more to keep alive in the schools the memory of the Father of his Country, and which has led to more humor, more or less good, than any other incident in his life. Lincoln returned with a sad heart the drenched volume to its owner, who made him work in the fields at twenty-five cents a day until the price which it originally cost had been paid up.

Lincoln possessed one of the most logical of minds and a singular faculty, of grasping all the facts and so marshalling them as to be irresistible in debate. He had that rarest gift of the lawyer—the talent to sift vast accumulations of material, testimony and precedents until he had hit upon and elucidated the real point upon which rested the success or failure of the case. He impressed these

readings upon his mind by making speeches to the horse or the oxen he was driving, to the woods through which he was walking to his work, and at the noonday hour in the fields he would mount a fence and spout his reflections to his fellow workers.

A lawyer loaned him Blackstone's Commentaries in four volumes. Every odd moment from hard work of every kind necessary to secure the money for a living was given to the study of this and other elementary works until he had thoroughly mastered them and the principles of law. He finally was admitted to the bar, but in training, culture and equipment he differed from most of his associates. Not only that, but his ethics of practice were antagonistic to those of all with whom he came in contact. A case which he believed wrong he would not take. If during the course of his investigations he learned his client had deceived him he would decline to proceed. He cared little for money and his charges were only sufficient for his limited necessities. Much of his practice was on behalf of the poor whom he thought wronged and from whom he could expect no reward. Without the opportunities of the law school or the law office, without the reading of a well equipped library he was always deficient in ability to cite precedents and decisions upon which the bar and the bench so largely depend. But he knew by heart the principles of the common law, and he was more familiar because of his years of communion with the plain people with ordinary human nature than any man in his circuit. With the ability to make difficult things plain to the humblest understanding and to clarify the most murky atmosphere of conflicting testimony he added humor and a faculty for apt illustration cultivated by his Bible, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, and Aesop's Fables and he possessed an exhaustless fund of anecdotes which nobody could tell so well or apply so happily as Abraham Lincoln. When he left the bar after twenty-three years of practice to become President of the United States he stood among the first of the legal lights of the State of Illinois.

But it was in riding the circuit during that quarter of a century that he was preparing unconsciously for the Presidency. He told me that at the county towns when court was held the judge, lawyers, litigants, witnesses and

grand and petit jurors would sit up all night at the hotel telling stories of things which had happened in the lives of an original frontier people, and he said they were better, more to the point and infinitely stronger for illustration and the enforcement of argument than all the stories and anecdotes which were ever invented. Human nature is best studied, public questions are more keenly discussed, character is better exhibited in the forum of the country grocery or drug store than anywhere else. There gather the elders, more or less wise, the lawyers looking for acquaintances, popularity and clients, and the young men listening and absorbing. Lincoln with his wonderful gift of humor, anecdote and argument was for years the idol of that forum. It was there he learned the invaluable lesson to him when dealing afterwards with mighty problems of state which required for their solution the support of the people how to so state his case and make his appeal that it would find a response in the humblest homes in every part of the land.

Mr. Lincoln's characteristic as a lawyer was, if possible, to get his client to settle, to bring together antagonists and to compose their differences. At that early time lawyers habitually encouraged litigation. Lincoln discouraged whenever possible. He believed in peace in the family and good will and good neighborhood in the town. He believed it to be a lawyer's duty and that he was aiding the best interests of his client to procure a settlement without the expense of litigation. He told an amusing story in this line. He said that a farmer came into his office one day insisting on divorce proceedings being commenced at once. Mr. Lincoln said: "What is the difficulty?" The farmer answered: "We have got along so well that we are now rich enough to abandon the log cabin and we have built a frame house. When the question came about painting I wanted it painted white like our neighbors, but my wife preferred brown. Our disputes finally became quarrels. She has broken crockery throwing it at my head and poured scalding tea down my back, and I want a divorce." Mr. Lincoln said: "My friend, man and wife should live together, if possible, for their own sake and for the children's, and endure a great deal. Now go back, keep your temper and compromise with

your wife. You could not have lived together all these years without learning some basis upon which you can compromise any difficulty, and don't come back for a month." At the end of four weeks the farmer returned and said: "Lincoln, you needn't bring that suit. My wife and I have compromised." "What is the compromise?" "Well," said the farmer, "we are going to paint the house brown."

Years of diligent study and this habit continued from early youth of expressing his ideas aloud and making speeches alike to trees and to people made him attractive to the local leaders of his party. His speech, when nominated for the legislature of Illinois, was a model of brevity. It was substantially this: I am in favor of a protective tariff, a national bank and internal improvements. If you like my principles, I should be glad to serve you. With the exception of the slavery issue that speech made in 1834, seventy-five years ago, has been practically the platform of the Republican party since its formation until today. Lincoln was of slow growth. There was nothing precocious about him. He matured along fine lines, and each year added to his mental stature. He made little impression during his four terms in the Legislature, except for diligence and intelligence. He served one term in Congress. There he displayed the prevailing characteristic of his political life. He expressed his opinions regardless of consequences. The country was aflame for the Mexican War. The American people are always with the President against a foreign enemy. He knew that war had been provoked in order to take territory away from Mexico for the extension of slavery. He followed in the lead of Tom Corwin and made a vigorous speech denouncing the policy and purpose of the war. Corwin's speech retired him permanently from public life and Lincoln was not again a candidate for the House of Representatives. This quality of his mind and moral courage were happily illustrated in the famous joint debates between Douglas and himself. Douglas was the most formidable debater either in the Senate or on the platform in the country. He was superbly prepared, equipped with every art of the orator, resourceful beyond anyone of his time and unscrupulous in the presentation of his own case and the misrepresentation

of that of his opponent. There was at that period a passionate devotion among the people to the Union, but very little sentiment against slavery. The Union was paramount above everything. There was no disposition to interfere with slavery where it was. The only unity on anti-slavery was against its extension into the territories. Lincoln prepared his first speech in this debate with great care and then submitted it to the party leaders who had put him forward and who constituted his advisers. When he came to the sentence "A house divided against itself cannot stand. This country cannot remain half slave and half free," they unanimously advised him to cut it out. They told him that Douglas would take advantage of it by appealing to the sentiment for the preservation of the Union as paramount to anything else, and that he would charge Lincoln with being in favor of dissolving the Union in order to free the negroes. Lincoln said: "We are entering upon a great moral campaign of education. I am not advocating Mr. Seward's higher law, but I am advocating the restriction of slavery within its present limits and the preservation of the new territories for free labor. That is more than immediate success and on that question we will ultimately succeed." Douglas did attack Mr. Lincoln, making this point, as the advisers thought, his main subject and it was one of the principal elements in his election. Once more the moral quality and courage of Mr. Lincoln came out when he submitted to his advisers putting to Mr. Douglas the question whether the people of the territories could exclude slavery by their territorial legislation. Douglas was claiming that it was a great advance for popular sovereignty to repeal the Missouri Compromise of 1820 which prohibited slavery in the territories by leaving the question to the people. Mr. Lincoln's advisers said: "He will answer yes." "Well," said Mr. Lincoln, "by answering no, it will ruin his whole program. If he answers yes, that will alienate the South, prevent his nomination for President and split the Democratic party." The results were as Lincoln predicted. Douglas was elected Senator. The South bolted the Democratic convention, the northern half nominating Douglas, the southern half Breckinridge. But what Lincoln did not anticipate, the Republican party nominated him and he was elected.

None of our Presidents have ever faced such conditions and problems as Mr. Lincoln encountered when inaugurated. Five States had already seceded. A Confederate government had been formed and its whole machinery was in operation with a President, Cabinet, Congress and Constitution. The arsenals were stripped of arms, the forts of guns, a large number of the ablest army officers were deserting to the Southern Confederacy, but his initial difficulties were with his own household. With the courage born of true greatness he summoned to his cabinet statesmen who had been for years national leaders and who were his contestants in the national convention. He drew them equally as far as possible from those who had been Whigs and Democrats prior to the formation of the Republican party four years before and who had come together on the question of the extension of slavery, though they differed upon every other matter of governmental policy. Seward, Chase and Cameron were household words in the country. The President was hardly known. These strong, cultured, ambitious and self-centered men, veterans in the public service, regarded with very little respect this homely, uncouth and almost unknown frontiersman who had, as they thought, become President by accident, when that great honor belonged to each of them. They thought that the President would be a cipher and the struggle would be only between them which as the stronger would so dominate the administration as to be practically President of the United States. Mr. Lincoln understood this and them perfectly. After a month Mr. Seward presented a written proposition to the President which meant practically that to unite the country war should be provoked with England and France and that he in those difficulties was quite willing to undertake the administration of affairs. There is no President, including Washington, who would not on such a letter have either surrendered or called for the resignation of his cabinet minister. But Mr. Lincoln's answer was the perfection of confident strength and diplomacy. He wanted the services of the best equipped man in the country for Secretary of State and the idol of nearly a majority of his party, and so he said, in effect: "The European war will lead to their siding with the South and dis-

solving the Union. We are to have a civil war and one is enough at once. You can perform invaluable service in your great department. I have been elected President and will discharge, myself, the duties of that office." He knew that Chase was disparaging him in conversation and trying to prevent his nomination in order to get it for himself, but he ignored these facts and supported Chase until his financial schemes, as Secretary of the Treasury, had given the country credit and money, and then promoted him out of the cabinet and out of politics by making him Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Seward early recognized the master mind of the President and that behind an exterior of deference and extreme amiability was the confident judgment and giant grip of a natural leader of men. Thenceforth this most accomplished of the orators, rhetoricians and dialecticians of his day, as well as one of its greatest statesmen became the devoted assistant of his chief.

Mr. Greeley, one of the greatest journalists the United States has ever produced, and possessing influence never since wielded by a single man upon public opinion, hated slavery and loved peace. In practical matters Mr. Greeley was very credulous and some of the shrewd and unscrupulous Southern leaders made him believe that they were empowered to treat for peace upon honorable terms. Mr. Lincoln knew better. He suggested to Mr. Greeley that he find out by a personal interview, but soon discovered that the negotiations between these alleged Confederate commissioners and the great journalist were part of a scheme on their part to gain time. He solved that problem in a characteristic way by suddenly issuing a proclamation, to whom it may concern, saying that anybody authorized to treat on behalf of the Confederate Government would have safe conduct through the United States to Washington and return, and the commissioners disappeared. The habit of tireless industry by day and night, patient research and clear analysis were applied by the President to the problems of the war. The great wars of Europe are carried on by the general staff, the civil government at home forwarding recruits and furnishing supplies, but we had no machinery or equipment for a great war. We had no general staff. Officers

had to be tried at fearful loss of life upon the battle field, and jealousies among them embarrassed operations, but in the White House was developed a great strategist and commander with neither partisanship nor prejudice. He sifted the claims of the different generals, and one by one eliminated them until he placed Grant in supreme command. He knew the position all over the vast region of the war of both his own troops and those of the enemy. He studied the maps until the roads for marching and transportation facilities for concentrating were better known by him than any of the military chiefs. His guiding hand and suggestive brain prevented many a disaster and turned many a defeat into victory. He familiarized himself with every department of the government, and while giving full credit to his cabinet he was still the master in the dispatches and negotiations finally agreed upon by the Secretary of State and in the operations of the Treasury, the War and the Navy Departments.

It was vital to the success of the Union that the Confederacy should not be assisted by foreign interference. He knew that it had been the object of European statesmen since the Holy Alliance and the Monroe Doctrine to divide, if possible, the United States and prevent a great world power growing up in the Western Hemisphere. He might have declared war on account of the equipment of the Confederate cruiser Alabama in British ports. England might have had a pretext for war when Captain Wilkes took the Confederate commissioners from a British vessel. But in the one case he trusted to diplomacy and delay, and in the other he promptly decided that the American officer had no right to go upon the deck of a British ship, sailing under the British flag, and seize its passengers, and promptly surrendered the Confederate commissioners. With the feeling that there was in the country of bitterness and resentment at that time against Great Britain, no man but Abraham Lincoln could have prevented a war. I have recently learned that unknown to his cabinet he would many an evening drop into the house of the British Minister and the effect of those consultations sent direct to the other side in confidence must have been of incalculable influence in causing British statesmen to keep hands off, and especially

in so advising Queen Victoria and Prince Albert that they remained through all our revolution staunchly our friends.

Mr. Lincoln hated slavery, but his love for the Union was greater. If he could save the Union by freeing all the slaves, or part of them, or none of them, he would so save the Union. I remember the gathering and then the full force of the storm against him because he would not free the slaves. Thaddeus Stevens, Horace Greeley, Benjamin Wade, Henry Winter Davis and all the old abolitionists, like Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison, were the mighty leaders of a formidable and an intelligent assault which few, if any, but him could have resisted. He knew that at least one-half of the Union Army cared nothing about slavery, but were willing to die for the Union. He knew that New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey would be uncertain if the issue was for slavery. He knew that the hundreds of thousands of soldiers from Kentucky, Tennessee, Maryland, Missouri and Virginia, who were among the best troops he had, might join the Confederate Army and carry with them their States if he attempted to free the slaves before they saw it was a necessity of war. The folly of these brilliant reformers is best exhibited by an incident which I knew when they answered this statement by saying it would be a gain to the cause if the border States were all lost and their troops with them. When, however, with knowledge greater than all of them, with a wisdom surer than any of them, with a contact and understanding with the plain people of the country such as none of them possessed he saw the time had come when the enemy must be deprived of the workers of the field who were supplying their armies and the servants in their camps who were attending to their wants and relieving their fighting force, he issued the immortal proclamation of emancipation and the doom of the Confederacy was sealed.

Justice and mercy were Lincoln's supreme characteristics. He bore no enmities, cherished no ill will and never executed any revenges, while the whole North was raging against those who had rebelled and millions believed that the destruction of their properties, the devastation of their lands and the loss of their slaves, which was their main property, was a just punishment for endeavoring to break up the

Union, Mr. Lincoln appreciated thoroughly the conditions which had impelled them to rebel. In the early days of the war he argued earnestly with his cabinet and the leaders in Congress for authorization to offer the South four hundred millions of dollars as a compensation for freeing their slaves. To the answer that the country could not stand the expense, he said: "The war is costing four millions a day and it will certainly last one hundred days." After he had visited Richmond when the war was over and returned to Washington, he again urged this proposition saying that the South was completely exhausted and this four hundred million would be the best investment the country could make in at once restoring peace and good will between all sections and furnishing the capital to the Southern people to restore their homes, recuperate their fortunes and start their industries. But in the bitter passions of the hour the proposition received no support.

A reputation for wit and humor or story telling has been fatal to many brilliant Americans. The people of the United States prefer serious men even if stupid and platitudinous in speech to those who no matter how brilliant in all ways are nevertheless famous for humor and anecdote. Mr. Lincoln survived because this faculty and habit did not become known until after he was President. I heard him tell a great many stories and every one of them enforced and clinched the argument stronger than hours of logic. We must remember that there was no civil service, that there were more appointments to office in the creation of the internal revenue system and in the customs a hundred fold then than had ever been before and that an army of two millions of men had to be officered and the question of the appointment and promotion of these officers come to the President, and the same of a large navy. The pressure of office seekers who came in swarms led by their Senators and Congressmen, would have crushed him except for his faculty of turning them off with an apt story or a joke. A political leader in Maryland at that period appeared nearly every day at the White House with a regiment of hungry applicants. Baltimore was only an hour away and it was so little expense that they could descend like an army of locusts at frequent intervals at the White House. The President, wearied until even his patience was

exhausted, directed one day that they should all be admitted at once. They filled the large room in which he stood. He was far from well and said: "Gentlemen, I at last have something that I can give you all." With one acclaim they commenced saying, "Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Mr. President," and their leader started to make a speech. The President said, "It is the smallpox. The doctor tells me I have variloid." The room was emptied in a second. A strong body of temperance people came to him after General Grant had won many victories and he was contemplating making him commander-in-chief and protested and even went so far as to demand Grant's dismissal on the ground that he was a hard drinker. Lincoln answered, "Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you would kindly tell me the brand of whiskey General Grant drinks. I would like to send a few bottles to my other generals." He rarely, with all his wit, humor and faculty for apt illustration, said anything which would hurt the feelings of his hearer. He cared little for poetry, but in early youth he had found in an old almanac a poem which he committed to memory and repeated often all through his life. It was entitled "Immortality" and the first verse was:

"Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift, fleeting meteor—a fast-flying cloud—
A flash of the lightning—a break of the wave—
He passeth from life to his rest in a grave."

He revered the sentiment of that poem. One day a Congressman with a delegation of constituents who wanted offices came into the room very drunk and commenced a speech to the President by saying, "Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" The President answered coldly, "I see no reason whatever," and dismissed them. Probably reminiscent of the loved and lost he often repeated this verse from Oliver Wendell Holmes:

"The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has prest
In their bloom:
And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb!"

"With malice toward none, with charity for all." This line, in one of his inaugurals, summed up the philosophy of his life. He was six feet four inches in height, with muscles of steel, and in early life among the rough, cruel, hard-drinking youth of the neighborhood was the strongest of them all, but his strength was always used to protect the weak against the strong, and to humble the bully, who is the terror of such communities. During his youth and early manhood he lived where drinking was so common it was the habit, and the young men were all addicted to whiskey and tobacco chewing, but the singular purity of his nature was such that notwithstanding the ridicule of his surroundings he never used either alcohol or tobacco. When President he so often reversed the sentences of court martials which condemned convicted soldiers to death that the generals complained bitterly. I heard General Sherman at one of his birthday dinners when asked by the Generals present how he got over these pardons, as the findings of the court had to be sent to the President for approval, answer grimly: "I shot them first."

The day before election, in 1864, when to the anxieties in the field were added those of the canvass, he heard of a widow whose five sons had enlisted and all been killed, and wrote to her in his own hand one of the most pathetic letters of condolence there is in such literature.

He is our only President who came to that great office from absolutely original American frontier conditions. Our early Presidents were landed aristocrats or the products of the great colleges of the country. Even the least equipped of our chief magistrates had opportunities for culture from the outside which amounted to a liberal education, but this man of the log cabin and the woods, having had the advantages of neither teachers nor schools, nor guides in the selection of books, courses of reading or curriculum of study before death removed him from the Presidency, towered high among the cultured, the statesmen and all the gifted genius of the country in both ideas and expression.

I first saw Mr. Lincoln when he stopped off his car for a few minutes at Peekskill while on his way to Washington for his inauguration. He was cheerful and light hearted, though he traveled through crowds, many of whom were

enemies, part of the time in secret and all the time in danger of assassination. I met him frequently three years afterwards when care, anxiety and overwork had made him look prematurely aged. I was one of the committee in charge of the funeral train which was bearing his body to his home while on its way through the State of New York. The hostile hosts of four years before were now standing about the roadway with bared heads, weeping. As we sped over the rails at night the scene was the most pathetic ever witnessed. At every cross-roads the glare of innumerable torches illumined the whole population, from age to infancy, kneeling on the ground and their clergymen leading in prayers and hymns. The coffin was placed in the capitol at Albany that the Governor, State Officers and Legislature might have a farewell look at the great President. The youthful confidence of my first view was gone, also the troubled and worn look of the closing years of his labors, but there rested upon the pallid face and noble brow an expression in death of serenity, peace and happiness.

We are celebrating within a few months of each other the tercentenary of Milton and the centenaries of Poe and Darwin. Our current literature of the daily, weekly and monthly press is full of eulogy of the Puritan poet, of his influence upon English literature and the English language, and of his immortal work, "Paradise Lost." There are not in this vast audience twenty people who have read "Paradise Lost," while there is scarcely a man, woman or child in the United States who has not read Lincoln's speech at Gettysburg. Few gathered to pay tribute to that remarkable genius, Edgar Allan Poe, and yet in every school house in the land today the children are reciting or hearing read extracts from the addresses of Lincoln. Darwin carved out a new era in scientific research and established the truth of one of the most beneficent principles for the progress and growth of the world. Yet Darwin's fame and achievements are for the select few in the higher realms of liberal learning. But for Lincoln the acclaim goes up today to him as one of the few foremost men of all the ages, from statesmen and men of letters of every land, from the halls of Congress and of the Legislatures, from the seats of justice, from colleges and universities, and above and beyond all, from the homes of the plain people of the United States.